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THE COUNSELOR GOES TO JAIL.

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DESPITE OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES, THE VALUE OF COMPETENT COUNSELING TO JAIL INMATES AS AN AID TOWARD REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND AS AN AID TO ADJUSTMENT HAS BEEN WELL ESTABLISHED. WHILE THE MOVEMENT IS SLOW, THERE ARE MORE JAILS WHICH ARE EITHER DIRECTLY ADMINISTERING COUNSELING PROGRAMS TO INMATES OR ARE AVAILING THEMSELVES OF SUCH SERVICES FROM VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY AGENCIES. THEY ARE REACHING SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALWAYS RESISTED, CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY, THE HELPING RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY. THIS RESISTANCE IS ONE REASON SUCH A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THE GROUP ARE ACTUALLY REJECTS FROM OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES. ON ANY ONE DAY THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1 MILLION INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED WITH THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM THROUGH PROBATION OR PAROLE, STATE OR FEDERAL PRISONS, OR LOCAL JAILS. THESE PEOPLE ARE SEGREGATED AND MAINTAINED AT AN OPERATIONAL COST OF $1 BILLION PER YEAR. THIS DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE SUBSIDIARY COSTS INCLUDING SUPPORT OF DEPENDENTS, COSTS TO VICTIMS, ECONOMIC LOSS TO THE COMMUNITY IN PRODUCTION AND TAXES. BETWEEN 40 AND 50 PERCENT OF THESE OFFENDERS ARE GOOD CANDIDATES FOR REHABILITATION THROUGH INTENSIVE COUNSELING. PREVENTION THROUGH REHABILITATION WOULD CUT COSTS SUBSTANTIALLY. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED TO THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION (DALLAS, MARCH 21, 1967). (AO)

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THE COUNSELOR GOES TO JAIL

Presented to

THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION

by

Joseph R. Silver, Executive Director
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Dallas, Texas

With complete modesty it is possible to admit that I like the title of this paper. In the first place I can take no credit for its authorship. But also because it is true and because it is provocative. When this title was chosen for me I immediately asked myself why this title is so provocative. It may be because we normally think of counseling as being offered in a free and if not informal at least a comfortable setting, where the client has a free choice in whether or not to seek our counseling; where the atmosphere and setting are both permissive. And we know that the normal jail is not like this.

One of the interesting developments in the field of corrections in recent years has been the increasing acknowledgement of the place of the jail in the treatment continuum. Treatment has assumed more and more importance in the field of corrections and has, by nature of the jail being the local institution, seeped down to the jail as last in the line.

Counseling in prison has become quite generally accepted as a valid part of good prison program; but this has not been so in the jail.

There are between 3,000 and 4,000 county jails in the country and of all the correctional institutions, if not community institutions in general, they are the most neglected as to social and therapeutic services.

The cost of operating these jails, exclusive of capital outlay, is $147,794,214.00. Sixty-five percent of the jails and local institutions in the country have no rehabilitation programs of any kind. Only three percent of all jail personnel are identified as professional. This three percent includes teachers as well as psychiatrists and social workers.

I do not say that California has the best jails in the country, but they are far from the worst. When the program of the Northern California Service League was introduced in 1948, there was, so far as we could ascertain, no other such case work and counseling program in the country.

Today there has been a considerable increase in these services in my own state of California and indeed there has been a noticeable trend across the country toward the development of similar services. (I was recently made an honorary citizen of a county in the southeast because of the interest of one of the county commissioners who visited me in regard to the introduction of counseling services in the jail in his county.)

It is difficult to know how many people are involved in our correctional system at any given time. However, the President's Crime Commission has estimated that in any one day there are some 1,300,000 individuals involved with the system through probation or parole, state or federal prisons or local jails. The operating cost of maintaining and supervising this congregation of individuals is estimated at one billion dollars per year, and

this takes into account none of the subsidiary costs: support of dependents; costs to the victims; economic loss to the community in production; loss of taxes; destruction of and damage to property, etc. So as one contemplates these figures punch is given to the problem of crime in our communities and the most effective ways of solving it.

Rehabilitation has come more and more into recognition as a necessary means of confronting the problem and most of those involved in efforts of rehabilitation are doing so because they recognize that the only ultimate protection of the community is the rehabilitation of those who have been involved in crime. This, as I have suggested, is much more readily accepted at the prison and felony level than at the jail and misdemeanant or petty offense level. This is due partly to the fact that the local institution is the one which is least well financed; partly because of the institution being subject to local politics; partly to the fact that the community thinks of the misdemeanant offender as being a ne'er-do-well and a person serving such a short sentence that nothing can be gained by providing therapeutic services; partly to the fact that many local officials have very limited views of the needs of their wards. It is very common for a local sheriff to identify professional services with "do-gooders" and to be convinced that the offender is not interested in "do-gooders"; has no real problems other than welfare such as employment, maintenance, etc.; and does not want to be interfered with. Anyone who has worked with offenders on a professional level knows the fallacy of this concept.

The jail is full of people who are plagued with sad, frustrating and complex problems. They need and many, if not the majority, want help with them.

They are problems of personal, social and psychological adjustment. For example, some people manage adequately after finding a job. Their problem of adjustment is relatively simple. The cause of their getting into jail is situational. Others have deep seated problems that lie behind their inability to hold a job once one is found. These people have gone to jail because of basic psychological problems that cannot be solved by the mere finding of the job. As a matter of fact, it is more often than not found that the external problems of handling money, environment, etc. stem from these inner psychological problems. Therefore, to help a person only with his material, concrete problem is to treat only the symptom. It is a little like concentrating on the spokes of a revolving wheel rather than on the hub.

Many of these offenders are not able to articulate or even recognize their problems, and therefore the initial contact with the counselor is apt to be for concrete services. But as a real relationship is established it is surprising to many people the amount of insight and self-examination that is brought to the fore.

Treatment, therefore, must be based on a recognition of the existence of psychological and personality problems among jail inmates; the acknowledgement that without help in solving them there will continue to be a high rate of recidivism; the acceptance of the responsibility by the community for giving help in solving their problems either through the jail administration or through private resources in the community.

This help must be provided, in addition to other elements of proper atmosphere or environment, in the forms of counseling, case work, and therapeutic services that can be given only by people of training and skill.

Since this is more than a mechanical manipulation of factors easy to control it requires insight on the part of the worker - understanding of his own motivation, blocks, prejudices, projections; understanding and acceptance of his own problems and mature organization of his own personality before he can help others to the maximum. It also requires an appreciation of what the possibilities are of helping another person discover and marshal his own inner resources, and the mastering of the skills used in helping another person to do this.

It is important to keep in mind that the jail is housing a group of people who feel the community's almost total rejection. They are people, many of whom have severe authority problems. They are people who are not for the most part able to articulate their problems nor able to use the normal agency resources in the community. They are, many of them, people who will require agressive casework if they are going to be reached.

It is a natural human reaction to want to avoid treatment and, certainly, to acknowledge the need for treatment. This is undoubtedly the reason, or one reason, why so many offenders resist the "headshrinker" idea.

The question is often asked whether it is possible to do counseling and therapeutic work in an authoratative setting. It is farthest from the impossible for a person representing a non-official voluntary agency to have completely voluntary relationships in the jail. This may be in some settings the only voluntary relationship the offender can make. This in itself is attractive and meets a need. It also represents a real factor of choice in deciding to see the counselor and describe his problem. It may be in fact the first counseling the individual has ever received.

Let me describe briefly three cases that recently requested counseling from our agency.

J. W., a nineteen year old Negro had committed robbery. He first went to the Guidance Center at twelve, to Youth Authority at fifteen. He was a good student until the ninth grade, doing best in history and science. The only time he was kept out of trouble was when he was employed by the Youth Opportunity Center. When the job ended he became involved with a group who preyed on white men prowling in the tenderloin. In all his years of Institutional life he has never had counseling and he is now asking for it.

E. W., a twenty year old Negro had committed forgery. While working as a houseboy he was unable to resist using some signed checks his employer had left in a desk. In his application he wrote as his reason for wanting to see a case worker "because I think he can help me better than anyone else and because I need counseling". In interview he referred to personal problems that he had never been able to discuss before. He has no previous record.

W. S., a white twenty-one year old sailor robbed a homo-sexual who picked him up. In his application he wrote "I would like to talk about modification, my case, sentence, counseling and just plain talk to someone." He has had no previous trouble with the law. In interview he said "I can't sleep at night because I feel so dirty and ashamed."

It might be well to analyze to some extent the population of the average county jail.

In California alone there are 600,000 to 700,000 commitments to jail per year. Of these 40 to 50 percent are drunks committed on common drunk

charges. This leaves at least half of a different caliber, different from the stereo-type. They are good candidates for rehabilitation. Even though not alcoholics many of them have drinking problems, many are users of drugs and narcotics, many are sex offenders and compulsive delinquents. A certain proportion have physical defects. One young man the Northern California Service League has worked with for many years has a severe hearing defect which has a direct bearing on the kind of employment he can obtain. We recently had one client who is constantly being arrested as a drunk, but who, it developed, was epileptic. While they are good subjects for rehabilitation and for vocational rehabilitation they need conditioning and preparing for holding the most menial job. Many have led very irregular lives with little regard to schedule. Anyone who is going to hold a real job needs to learn how to live by schedule and many of these clients are quite capable of so learning.

Another client, G. H., was arrested on a homo-sexual charge while working on his master's degree. He has never held anything but the most menial of clerical jobs which he repeatedly loses due to new arrests. By a great deal of counseling in which he received help with his psychological problems his employment record has markedly improved.

L. S. was a drug user and had never developed an adequate concept of time. By patient counseling for a period of one year he developed this and is now earning good wages as a meat cutter.

While, as I have said, counseling is found all too rarely in jails today, it is increasingly used individually and in groups. Because it can be shown

that there is a relationship between such counseling and a lowering in the rate of recidivism and an improvement in adjustment, these services are of a preventive nature.

The individual counseling that is to be found in jails today varies greatly in terms of the qualifications and skills of those doing the counseling, of the particular counseling needs the jail has or feels it has and of general resources available. Great importance should be attached to the training and experience of the counselor and his stability and maturity. And yet partly because of the shortage of qualified personnel and partly because of other philosophical reasons there is a growing number of jail personnel - deputies, guards, etc. - who are being used for this function. With some training and orientation this type of personnel can offer a certain level of counseling or guidance and in doing so the treatment or therapeutic atmosphere of the institution can be greatly increased. In some institutions there are lay volunteers from the community who visit the jail for counseling purposes. Such resources can be utilized if proper selection is made, if training can be available and if there is adequate professional supervision. It will be found that in any jail where individual counseling services are offered which command the respect and confidence of the inmate population there will be no lack of response from the inmates. While it is true that many offenders are not able to formulate their needs or desires, they are at the same time uncomfortable, often in mental anguish, often full of guilt, and in a crisis situation. They therefore seek for relief and help. The better known and the more effective the counselor, the more his services will be sought.

An increasing number of jails are making use of group counseling in various forms. When this is conducted by deputies and such this may be of a somewhat superficial nature although anything but unimportant. Such counseling may deal with pre-release planning, general social adjustment, etc. In some jails the lay personnel are becoming quite sophisticated and able in dealing with the day to day problems of the inmate in relation to the group.

There are a few jails in which the principles of the therapeutic community as developed by Dr. Maxwell Jones and Dr. Harry Wilmer are being extensively and effectively used. This is true for example in the San Mateo County Jail, in the San Francisco Bay Area, and also in the San Diego County of Honor Camps. In this program one of the eight camps is built on this basis and staff and inmates sleep together in the same barracks, eat together and meet in small groups. At least once a week they meet in a total group. In these groups not only are the problems of the group living discussed but also the personal and social problems of the members of the group. In short, the whole camp is designed as a therapeutic community.

Incidentally, an observation might be made in this connection. It is ironical that so much of our business and professional life is structured on the premise that the ex-offender cannot be trusted - reluctance to hire, refusal to bond, refusal to license, etc. - and yet I seldom see the kind of intellectual honesty and struggle that goes with it that I see in some of the inmate groups in the jails and prisons that I know.

There are definite problems that the counselor in jail has to deal with. One is the institutional routine of the jail. Gates have to be locked and unlocked. Free movement is difficult if not impossible. Commissary, showers

and lock ups interfere with schedules and relationships with inmates. The jail is for the most part an autocratic institution and the counselor takes a subordinate role to the operation of the institution. This of course contributes to the atmosphere within the jail which is discoureging to comfortable relationships and functioning.

A problem that the counselor who represents a voluntary agency has to handle is the suspicion with which he is held by many public officials and workers in public agencies. This is due to many causes; but it demands great integrity, candor and responsibility on the part of such a counselor.

At the same time there are certain definite satisfactions and opportunities offered. The counselor in jail has the satisfaction of reaching some of those people who have always resisted, consciously or unconsciously, the helping resources in the community. They have resisted being helped which is the reason such a high percentage of the group are actually rejects from other agencies in the community.

He also has the opportunity of being influential in opening to the treatment philosophy, a so called closed institution.

There is tremendous satisfaction in being able to relate to certain hard core individuals who have resisted treatment, who have resisted relationship, and helping them recognize and analyze their problems and needs people who have never done this before. There are the rewards of agressive case work when individuals are related to who would never otherwise relate to the helping services available to them.

After hearing a description of counseling services in the jail, one has the right to ask about the results and the validity of these services. How do you measure results? Just by the amount of recidivism? How do you measure movements?

For this purpose the Northern California Service League has just completed a three year research project working with referrals from the Adult courts of San Francisco. The cases were selected by the San Francisco Adult Probation Department and the Courts, the only criteria required by the Service League being that the person referred would not be a subject for normal probation and would otherwise have gone to jail or prison. One purpose of the project was to test the feasability of treating by intensive counseling a group of this type in the community on probation, with such treatment by the Service League being a condition of probation. Careful and complete records were kept.

Several observations and comparisons were found. Our intent was to compare various factors of adjustment in addition to the one of new offenses committed.

In regard to employment, during the first four week treatment period 35% of the available work time was spent in full time employment and an additional 10% in part time. The amount of full time employment steadily increased until the end of the treatment period when 63.7 percent was spent in full time employment and all the group were engaged in either full or part time employment.

Support of dependents was another area of adjustment measured. Of those in

the failure group of the project, twenty-five percent supported their dependents. Of those in the success group 81.8 percent supported their dependents. An analysis of the savings and welfare costs represented in this support of dependents totaled $39,255.00 for the twenty-six month period. This represents the amount contributed to the economy by the group during that period. It does not represent savings and cost of incarceration, which in California is approximately $2,600.00 per year per inmate. This savings is materially larger than the cost of the project.

A comparison of the new offense record of those in the project and those in the control group which was set up to compare this particular data shows that 78.9 percent of the project group committed no new offenses but only 69.5 percent of the cohort group committed no new offenses. A difference of 11.4 percent represents a marked decrease in recidivism. In a similar project which the Service League conducted some five or six years ago there was a very similar difference between new arrest record among those who had been treated and those who had not.

On the basis of this three year experience the Northern California Service League has been working for the last six months on a grant from the Federal Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in further analysis of the data acquired in this project. We have made application for a further grant from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to extend this inquiry into further and possibly more reliable ways of measuring movement in the rehabilitation process. There is little knowledge relative to what occurs in the rehabilitation process of the offender which is based on quantatative objective studies. With more precise information as to how the change from

non-conforming behavior occurs, treatment efforts can be more sharply focused on reducing time and cost of treatment as well as facilitating the teaching of treatment methods to new staff. If this grant is received the results would have an important bearing not only on the field of corrections but on the whole field of counseling and social work.

In summary, despite the obstacles and difficulties that have to be dealt with the value of competent counseling in the jail has been well established. While the movement is slow there are more and more jails which are either directly administering counseling programs with their inmates or are availing themselves of such services from voluntary community agencies. Results are not easy to measure but the Northern California Service League is engaged in research in this field and is hopeful of being able to extend our knowledge of what happens in the rehabilitation process.